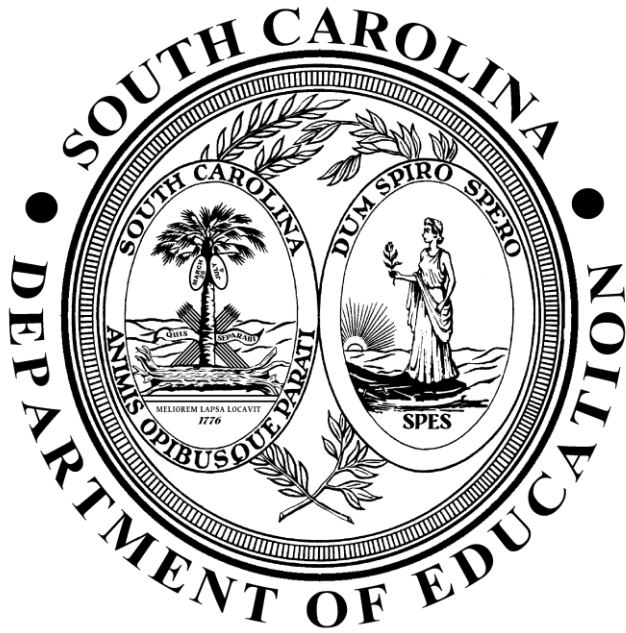


**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**MOLLY M. SPEARMAN**  
*STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION*



**South Carolina School Improvement  
Framework**

**Version 2.0**

November 2017

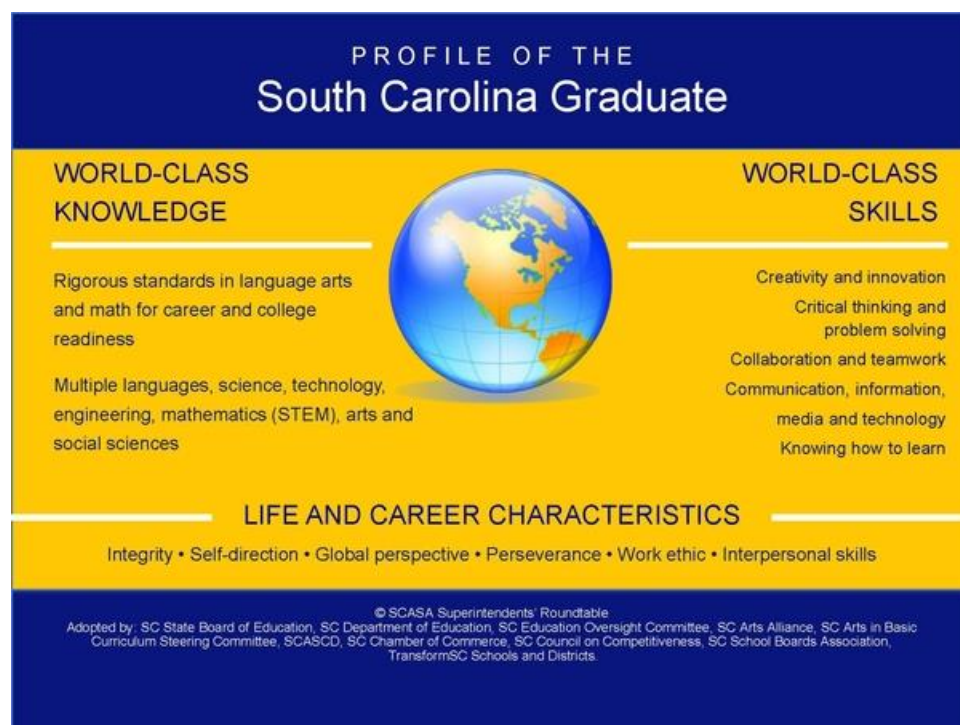
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## Introduction

The vision of State Superintendent Molly Spearman and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is that all students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. The SCDE will work to accomplish this vision through state-level leadership, as well as school and district support to operationalize the most effective teaching and learning strategies to help make the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* a reality for every student in our state. All children in our state, regardless of their economic status, deserve a high-quality, education that prepares them for successful professional and personal lives. Every child who does not graduate from high school or who enters the workforce underprepared is at risk of not becoming a contributor to our state's progress. High quality education is not just a state economic issue; it is a personal and moral issue. Every South Carolina child deserves the opportunities a high-quality education affords. There is great consensus in South Carolina around this vision and mission, and the need is clear for students to graduate with the world class knowledge, the world class skills, and the life and career characteristics outlined in the *Profile*.



*Figure 1. The Profile of the South Carolina Graduate represents the SCDE's vision for student learning in the state, and has been adopted by a wide body of stakeholders and the state's General Assembly. Source: South Carolina Department of Education. (2017). Retrieved from <http://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/profile-of-the-south-carolina-graduate/>*

We acknowledge that we have schools, and sometimes entire districts, in South Carolina that are not successful in providing the education students need to perform at high levels required to graduate from high school college or career ready. The challenges in these districts are great, but research and experience have shown that school turnaround is possible. We believe that every South Carolina School Improvement Framework  
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child can learn and more importantly, South Carolina has the collective knowledge, capability, and will to teach every child successfully.

Proviso 1A.12 of the 2017-18 budget requires that “[t]he department will create a system of tiers of technical assistance for low-performing schools and districts that will receive technical assistance.” The Education Accountability Act (EAA) requires that the department “develop a system for providing services and technical assistance to districts that shall include academic assistance and assistance with finances.” S.C. Code § 59-18-1610(A). The [initial report](#) on the system was due December 31, 2016, and the EAA requires annual reports on progress with “data documenting the impact of the assistance on student achievement and on high school graduation rates.” *Id.*

The SCDE on October 13, 2017 submitted its plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to the U.S. Department of Education. Under the EAA, South Carolina is to have one combined state and federal accountability system. This *South Carolina School Improvement Model* amends the previously reported system, and outlines an updated, cohesive, and coordinated process of supporting underperforming schools across the state. This document provides the plan and process adopted by the SCDE to ensure high-level learning for all students at all schools in South Carolina. The document is organized into the following sections:

- I. South Carolina School Improvement Programs and Goals
- II. The *South Carolina School Improvement Model*
- III. SCDE School Improvement Team
- IV. SCDE Transformation Coaches
- V. Transformation Advisory Group
- VI. Criteria for Identification of Priority Schools (Comprehensive Support and Intervention)
- VII. Levels of Intervention
- VIII. Tiers of Technical Assistance and Support
- X. Criteria for Identification of Focus Schools (Targeted Support and Intervention)
- XI. South Carolina School Improvement Cycle Timeline and Actions
- XI. Closing Observations
- XII. References
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## **I. South Carolina School Improvement Program and Goals**

Three programs within the South Carolina Department of Education – Priority Schools (Comprehensive Support and Improvement), Focus Schools (Targeted Support and Improvement), and School Improvement Grants – play a vital role in improving the state’s low-performing schools. While some schools have improved with the support of these programs in the past, the vast majority remain underperforming, immersed in a continuous cycle of planning that has not resulted in performance gains. We know from a recent review of the Federal School Improvement Grant Program that additional funding and improvement plans built on ineffective processes and systems previously in operation have not been successful in improving low-performing schools (Dragoset, et al., 2017). Our updated model emphasizes building the collective capacity of school and district leaders by providing targeted professional development, and differentiated and timely support that is aligned to each school’s or district’s unique needs.

The SCDE School Improvement Team is currently (2017) comprised of 30 transformation coaches, a team leader, School Improvement Grant Program Manager, School Improvement Program Manager, Charter Grant Program Manager, and Office of School Transformation Director. The goal of the Team is to provide differentiated support and intervention to low-performing schools and districts by building local capacity and expertise for sustained improvement. The ultimate and intended impact is to improve student achievement and to prepare students to meet the expectations set forth in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. To determine each school’s unique needs, the Office of School Transformation conducts an external review to examine all facets of school operations, focusing on strengths and weaknesses, providing recommendations for improvement strategies to assist schools/districts in raising academic achievement. As required by the EAA Section 59-18-1510, the external review team process is conducted when a school or district receives a rating of at-risk or unsatisfactory. This process must be implemented by the SCDE to examine the school and district educational programs, actions, and activities. In addition, each Priority School (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) will receive differentiated technical assistance based on a tiered system of intervention and support. South Carolina school improvement goals are re-evaluated at least every three years to align to the interim targets in the South Carolina State Consolidated ESSA plan. Performance under each of the following goals below will be assessed annually.

- By 2020 fifty percent of Focus Schools (Targeted Support and Improvement) will reduce their most significant subgroup gap with baselines and cut scores established based on state summative assessment scores from 2017.
- By 2020 fifty percent of Priority Schools (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) will show improvement on annual state tests in ELA or mathematics with baselines and cut scores established based on state summative assessment scores from 2017.

## II. **The South Carolina School Improvement Model**

The *South Carolina School Improvement Model* is intended to:

1. Break the cycle of chronic low performance;
2. Give the SCDE a more substantive, capacity and expertise-building role in school improvement;
3. Coordinate and integrate state efforts to achieve state-wide excellence for all children; and
4. Support schools and districts in developing and implementing a continuous, sustainable improvement model that supports student achievement at the highest levels.

We know that effective and sustainable solutions address both systemic issues and individual school practices. To affect this level of change in our lowest performing schools and districts, the SCDE will work to achieve the following:

- Build capacity for effective change, especially in small, rural districts,
- Deepen state and local understanding of what it takes to turn schools around in South Carolina,
- Streamline funding, reporting and progress monitoring,
- Improve timely access to and effective use of data,
- Improve the timeline and coherence of technical assistance, ensuring the alignment of technical assistance to the needs of the school and district based on data,
- Bring state and national funding and resources to address school and district needs,
- Strategically guide and support local efforts, and
- Provide significant, tangible, and productive consequences for schools and districts unable to improve with assistance.

The *South Carolina School Improvement Model* provides the theoretical and practical foundation for the state's school improvement efforts and includes a renewed focus on the following principles.

*Needs Assessment:* The external review team process is used to identify and assess key deficiencies and provide a set of prioritized recommendations to support improvement. As a result of the process, schools and districts are able to select relevant, evidence-based interventions and practices that are aligned to the recommended improvement priorities. This is an essential part of assessing each school's specific needs and targeted areas for improvement. The external review team process, also known as the needs assessment, initiates the improvement cycle.

*Differentiated Intervention:* The *South Carolina School Improvement Model* includes tiers of technical assistance designed to tailor support and intervention to the specific needs of the school or district. This differentiated system is discussed in detail in Section

VII. Improvement needs are identified from the needs assessment and drive the type, and intensity of support and intervention.

*Focused Improvement:* Improving the performance of schools and districts will include: 1) diagnosing deficiencies, 2) identifying a set of clear and effective improvement strategies, 3) implementing strategic, evidence-based improvement practices with fidelity, and 4) monitoring the impact of the improvement strategies on student achievement. Previous efforts focused on school planning and compliance. Current efforts will focus on building the capacity of district leaders as well as building leaders and teachers to improve student outcomes and sustain achievement using a set of focused, strategic, and evidence-based strategies and interventions.

*Innovation:* The role of the SCDE is to provide the research-based innovative practices, to bring the knowledge and ideas of national experts to bear on school and district needs and to design frameworks to scale up successful, innovative ideas. In addition, both currently participating schools and schools that have successfully exited support programs are expected to share their experiences and spread innovative ideas among colleagues.

*Increased State Capacity:* The *School Improvement Model* encourages collaboration around school improvement efforts and encourages SCDE programs and staff to work together with stakeholders, federal partners, comprehensive centers, and national experts to identify what works in South Carolina. In the *Model*, SCDE programs and transformation coaches engage in continuous improvement alongside the schools they serve (see Section IV for a more detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of transformation coaches).

*State Stakeholder Participation:* It is vital that the SCDE initiate a turnaround agenda that includes the voices of stakeholders most affected, communicates the importance of improved performance, and provides additional stakeholder support for school turnaround across the state. The School Improvement Advisory Group described in this document will be instrumental in all school improvement efforts.

### **III. South Carolina School Improvement Team Roles and Responsibilities**

The SCDE School Improvement Team is a cross-program collaborative body comprised of representatives from programs with assigned authority to improve or move students toward college and career readiness. The team is led by the Director of the Office of School Transformation with representative membership including:

- School Improvement Program Manager
- Transformation Coaches
- School Improvement Grant Program Manager
- External Review Team Coordinator
- Office of School Transformation Team Leader

This cross-program team administers and leads South Carolina's school improvement process. Specific actions include:

- Monitor and analyze relevant data at the school, district, and state levels,
- Identify the level of intervention and the targeted interventions for each identified school,
- With help from external review team lead evaluator(s), identify the state's lowest performing schools and districts and next steps for the improvement team,
- Facilitate the development of outcome-oriented school renewal plans, including plan development, and the process for approval, monitoring, and evaluation, and
- Provide schools with actionable, high-quality needs assessments and school improvement priorities.

### **IV. South Carolina Transformation Coaches**

The SCDE has established a cadre of transformation coaches to serve schools in South Carolina. Coaches bring a variety of skills and experiences to this role including, but not limited to, school-level leadership, district-level leadership, programmatic expertise (Title I, Special Education, Response to Intervention), and content expertise. Job qualifications include:

- Evidence of successful school turnaround and/or innovation,
- Literacy in the use of data and assessment for school improvement,
- Successful experience with mentoring or coaching colleagues, and
- A clear ability to listen and reflect.

Coaches play a vital role in helping school and district leadership teams develop outcome-oriented school renewal plans that incorporate identified improvement priorities from the school or district's most recent needs assessment. Coaches also work with leadership teams to help school and district leaders develop the appropriate structures to monitor implementation and evaluate the impact of improvement strategies on student achievement. All coaches participate in annual trainings and information sessions regarding SCDE policies. Transformation coaches are expected to model growth-oriented leadership and lifelong learning. To that end, coaches engage in an annual school improvement review and planning process during which goals and objectives are set and progress is assessed according to pre-determined performance criteria. As part of this process, transformation coaches are responsible for measuring and reporting on pre-determined



program outcomes, at least one of which will include stakeholder satisfaction with their performance.

### *The Role of Transformation Coaches in School Improvement*

Transformation coaches support the school leadership team in operationalizing the school improvement process. Transformation coaches are continuously trained on the *South Carolina School Improvement Model*, research related to school improvement and transformation, cultural competence, and SCDE vision and policies. Specifically, transformation coaches help to emphasize that improvement is a continuous cycle for all schools, regardless of their level of performance. Support from the SCDE School Improvement Team and Transformation Coaches is on site and ongoing. A state education agency (SEA) team and transformation coach's roles and responsibilities chart of timeline and actions can be found in *Appendix A*. There are a number of key activities performed by transformation coaches.

- Assist schools in implementing the *South Carolina School Improvement Model*.
- Guide and support district/school planning in regard to school change and improvement.
- Develop strategies to support and assess program and school level outcomes.
- Provide needed professional development.
- Act as a leadership coach for school principals.
- Act as an instructional coach for school-level professional learning communities.
- Engage in on-the-job training and professional improvement.

### **V. School Improvement Advisory Group (SIAG)**

The SCDE is committed to ensuring that all students in South Carolina graduate and reflect the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. We recognize how vital it is to work hand-in-hand with our school districts, schools, educators, partner organizations, and community members. The School Improvement Advisory Group is a state level group that has access to SCDE staff, planning, evaluations, data and the research that inform school improvement work in our state through quarterly meetings. Further, members have the opportunity to provide input and feedback on critical implementation issues related to Priority Schools (Comprehensive Support and Intervention), Focus Schools (Targeted Support and Intervention), school turnaround, initiatives like the South Carolina State Plan for Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, and implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Additional goals of the SIAG are to ensure state interventions have stakeholder involvement and to support a new state-wide dialogue focused on our lowest performing districts. In the spring of 2016, the SCDE convened a twenty-member School Improvement Advisory Group (SIAG) to examine and provide input to school improvement for our state's lowest performing districts.

School Improvement Advisory Group members may include the following:

- Building and District level educators,
- School Improvement Councils,
- Educational state organization representatives,
- Business community representatives,
- Representatives of institutions of higher education, and

- Representatives from state social services agencies.

The SIAG will provide input to the planning and implementation of the *South Carolina School Improvement Model* and will inform the development and implementation of all SCDE school improvement programs.

The SIAG will address some of the most pressing questions in public education today, including:

- What are the root causes of failure in our lowest performing schools and districts?
- Given these root causes, what models of school and district turnaround are relevant in South Carolina?
- How can school reform take place while balancing research and what we know works with local control within the community context?
- Once achieved – especially in a fragile environment – how is success sustained? What does it mean for a school to be successful in terms of overall performance versus subgroup performance?
- How do we acknowledge our challenges while emphasizing successes?

## **VI. Criteria for Identification of Priority Schools and CSI**

To identify low performing schools, the state will use the designations “priority schools” and “comprehensive support and improvement schools” (CSI) .

Priority schools are defined as schools that need support because they meet one or more of the following categories:

- Title I schools in the bottom ten (10) percent using the weighted point index; or
- Non-Title I schools differentiated by elementary, middle, and high school in the bottom ten (10) percent using the weighted point index; or
- Less than 70 percent graduation rate; or
- Title I Schools with chronically low-performing subgroup(s).

Subject to funding, additional support will also be provided to Priority Schools using the State’s tiered support matrix.

Comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools are defined as:

- Title I schools in the bottom five (5) percent using the weighted point index; or
- Title I and Non-Title I schools with a graduation rate of less than 70 percent.
- Title I Schools with chronically low-performing subgroup(s).

CSI schools will receive additional support and technical assistance to support school improvement efforts. An elementary or middle school may exit Priority Status upon achieving the following:

- A final summative score on the weighted point index that is above the bottom (10) ten percent of Title I or non-Title I schools (differentiated by elementary, middle, high) and a growth rating of Good; or
- The identified subgroup(s) performance moves above the performance of ALL students in the highest performing Title I CSI school in graduation rate, college and career readiness, student engagement, and a growth rating of “Good.”

An elementary or middle school may exit CSI Status upon achieving the following:

- A final summative score on the weighted point index that is above the bottom (5) five percent of Title I or non-Title I schools (differentiated by elementary, middle, high) and a growth rating of Good; or
- The identified subgroup(s) performance moves above the performance of ALL students in the highest performing Title I CSI school in graduation rate, college and career readiness, student engagement, and a growth rating of “Good” and a growth rating of “Good.”

A high school could exit Priority Status upon achieving the following:

- A final summative score on weighted point index that is above the bottom (10) ten percent of Title I schools and non-Title I schools and a three percent increase in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.
- A graduation rate that is 70 percent or higher; and a three percent increase in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.
- The identified subgroup(s) performance moves above the performance of ALL students in the highest performing Title I CSI school in achievement, growth, preparing for success graduation rate, college and career readiness, and positive and effective learning environment and increase by three percent in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.

A high school could exit CSI Status upon achieving the following:

- A final summative score on weighted point index that is above the bottom five percent of Title I schools and a three percent increase in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.
- A graduation rate that is 70 percent or higher; and a three percent increase in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.
- The identified subgroup(s) performance moves above the performance of ALL students in the highest performing Title I CSI school in achievement, growth, preparing for success graduation rate, college and career readiness, and positive and effective learning environment and increase by three percent in the school’s average number of points earned in the college and career readiness indicator.

Schools will enter their planning year the same year and the Priority and CSI designations will apply for three additional years (2018–2020). The first cycle will be abbreviated to match the state’s interim targets. Beginning in 2020, the comprehensive and support criteria may apply a three-year average methodology to identify schools in the bottom five percent in achievement, growth/graduation rate, and English Language Proficiency.

## Levels of Intervention

Schools in South Carolina are not one-size-fits-all, and as a state, we value local control and flexibility. Universal support is provided to all South Carolina schools through a variety of professional learning opportunities and support services via the Offices of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development, Standards and Learning, Special Education Services, and other agency support mechanisms. Underperforming schools are identified publicly as Priority Schools or Focus Schools using publically available metrics and data; those schools receive additional support.

State intervention and support services are tailored to meet the needs and particular contexts of individual schools and communities. To that end, the *South Carolina School Improvement Model* establishes four status levels with a menu of appropriate, differentiated interventions at each level. Interventions are intended to target state involvement and support to the specific needs of the schools or districts; therefore, some modification may be made. The overall *Model* provides SCDE staff across programs with a framework for working together and supporting the state's diverse schools.

### *Criteria for Identification of Tier Status Levels for Priority Schools*

Pursuant to the Education Accountability Act and Proviso 1A.12 and EAA § 59-18-1610, the SCDE has created a tiered system of technical assistance for low-performing schools and districts. The tiers are determined by four considerations. Those considerations are:

1. The amount of time that the school has been identified as a Priority or Comprehensive Support and Improvement School; or amount of time the school has been rated Below Average or At Risk/Unsatisfactory;
2. The annual achievement ratings based on student performance on the most recent state summative assessments;
3. The status of school or district accreditation, and;
4. The district's fiscal practice/ financial risk status.

Technical assistance support may include additional funding comprised of a per student allocation; placement of a principal mentor, transformation coach, or instructional leader; replacement of the principal; reconstitution of the school; and/or declaration of a state of emergency. Low-performing schools are placed within the tiered technical assistance framework not later than December 15 each year. In addition, newly identified low-performing schools and districts are reviewed by an External Review Team in the year of designation and every third year thereafter. Non-confidential portions of these reports are made available on the SCDE's website. Based upon the recommendations in the review, low-performing schools and districts must develop and submit to the SCDE an updated school renewal or district strategic plan outlining goals, strategies, and action steps for improvement. The amended plans must address specific strategies designed to increase student achievement and must include measures to evaluate the success of implementation of the plan. Strategies for improvement must align with the set of improvement priorities recommended based on the results of the school's or district's most recent needs assessment and most recent student achievement data. The plan must include

the research-basis for supporting that the proposed strategies will achieve the improvement objectives.

The *South Carolina School Improvement Model* designates four tier levels for differentiated intervention. To place schools into an appropriate status level, a point system is applied across four dimensions: length of time in priority status, weighted point index ranking, financial risk status, and accreditation deficiencies. It is important to note that the weighted point index for each school is calculated using the school's annual achievement ratings and annual growth ratings. Points are attributed to each of the criteria based on escalating descriptors related to the school's performance.

## **VII. Tiers of Technical Assistance and Support:**

The tiers will be determined by factors that include, but are not limited to, length of time performance of the school or district has been at-risk/below average, the weighted point index ranking, school or district accreditation, and/or financial risk status, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1*

*Tiers of Technical Assistance Criteria*

<b>Pts</b>	<b>Weighted Point Index Ranking</b>	<b>Accreditation Status</b>	<b>Financial Risk</b>	<b>Length of Years in Improvement Status</b>
0		All Clear		Newly identified
1	top third (between 10% and 6.6%)	Advised	Low Risk	1-3 Years
2	middle third (between 6.6% and 3.3%)	Warned	Medium Risk	4-6 Years
3	bottom third (bottom 3.3%)	Probation	High Risk	7 or more Years

Based on the total number of points earned from all of the criteria above, Non-Charter, Priority Schools are assigned a tier based on the following:

- Tier 1-Schools scoring between 2 and 4 points;
- Tier 2-Schools scoring between 5 and 8 points;
- Tier 3-Schools scoring between 9 and 12 points

Charter Priority Schools are assigned a tier based on the following:

- Tier 1-Schools scoring between 1 and 3 points;
- Tier 2-Schools scoring between 4 and 6 points;
- Tier 3-Schools scoring between 7 and 9 points

*Note: Accreditation status is not included in calculating the tier of charter schools.*

Each dimension assigns an increased number of points to schools based on the severity of their status as it relates to each criterion. All priority schools are assigned a weighted point index score based on student performance indicators as noted in the ESSA state consolidated plan. After determining each school's weighted point index score, scores are ranked from highest to lowest to determine the number of points to be assigned in this category to each school. Priority Schools that rank in the top one-third of the weighted point index among all Priority Schools are assigned 1 point, while those ranking in the middle third or bottom third are assigned two or three points respectively. All schools must meet the criteria to be accredited through the SCDE. Schools submitting accreditation reports are seeking an "all clear" on accreditation criteria, as this indicates that schools and districts meet state law requirements, have appropriately certified personnel providing instruction in the areas for which they are qualified to teach, and submit on time all required reports in accordance with state statutes.

When schools have deficiencies, there is an escalation of designations from "all clear" to "advised," "warned," "probation," and ultimately the school is denied accreditation. A designation of probation indicates that the school has had significant accreditation deficiencies for three consecutive years and the school is approaching the "denied accreditation" status. A designation of "denied" may trigger a priority school being placed at Tier Four Status, which allows a declaration of emergency to be declared as described in *Proviso 1A.12* and EAA §§ 59-18-1520, -1570. The financial risk status of districts is assessed annually by the Office of Auditing Services based upon data collected by grant program offices, the State Accountability program, and the Chief Financial Officer. Each district's compliance with uniform grant guidance, internal control procedures, the statewide fiscal practices program, as described in S.C. Code Ann. §§ 59-20-90 et seq. (H.3221 (2017)), are reviewed annually. Based on the guidance set forth in that law, the SCDE is required to review the state of each school district's fiscal status. Upon review, each district is assigned a descriptor based on their financial practices, such as fiscal watch, caution, or emergency for various items. Based on the aforementioned elements, districts may be rated as low risk, medium risk, or high risk. Districts that exhibit a greater degree of financial risk, receive a higher number of points in this dimension. The final dimension, length of time in improvement status, is based on a review of the length of time a school has been identified as at risk (unsatisfactory) or below average or CSI (bottom 5%). An increased number of points are given to schools that have been low performing and in improvement status over a substantial number of years.

Table 2

*South Carolina Tiers of Technical Assistance Support and Intervention Matrix*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Tier One</b>	<b>Tier Two</b>	<b>Tier Three</b>	<b>Tier Four</b>
Assessment of Leadership and Instruction	Needs assessment completed to identify improvement priorities.	Needs assessment completed to identify improvement priorities.	Needs assessment completed to identify improvement priorities.	Needs assessment completed to identify improvement priorities. SCDE may/will replace building leaders
On Site Support	Part time Transformation Coach	Part Time Transformation Coach	Full Time (school) Transformation Coach	State of Emergency and SCDE assumes management of schools Full time School Transformation Coach(es)
School Improvement Planning	School Renewal Planning- strategies closely aligned with improvement priorities; monitored by Transformation Coach	School Renewal Planning- strategies closely aligned with improvement priorities; monitored by Transformation Coach	School Renewal Planning- strategies aligned with improvement priorities; monitored more closely by Transformation Coach	School Renewal Planning- improvement strategies mutually agreed upon by SCDE, school/district and aligned with improvement priorities; monitored at least weekly by Transformation Coach
School Improvement Intervention and Implementation	Leadership capacity review	Leadership capacity review	Leadership capacity review	Leadership capacity review
	*Autonomy to select strategies for improvement	Limited autonomy to select strategies for improvement	Limited autonomy to select strategies for improvement	Limited autonomy to select strategies for improvement
	*Evidence based strategies must be at the “rationale level” (positive evaluation that strategy is likely to improve student outcomes) at a minimum	* Evidence-based interventions selected must meet the “promising level” with a correlational or quasi-experimental study to demonstrate statistically significant effect on student outcomes at a minimum	* Evidence-based interventions must be at “moderate or strong level” and demonstrate statistically significant effect on student outcomes at a minimum	*Evidenced-based interventions must be at “moderate” or “strong level” with a randomized control group and demonstrate statically significant effect on student outcomes at a minimum

Monitoring of Professional Development and Technical Assistance for Financial Services	Professional Development-Transformation Coach and/or various SCDE offices. Expert services provided on contractual basis as deemed necessary	Professional Development-Transformation Coach and/or various SCDE offices. Expert services provided on contractual basis as deemed necessary	Professional Development-Transformation Coach and/or various SCDE offices. Expert services provided on contractual basis as deemed necessary  Triage Team System Level Intervention	Professional Development, on-site support of Trans. Coach & various SCDE offices. Expert services provided on as needed basis  Triage Team System Level Intervention
Technical Assistance Funding	Autonomy on use of technical assistance funds	Mild SCDE guidance on use of technical assistance funds	Strong SCDE guidance and direction on use of technical assistance funds in consultation with school and district	SCDE control and direction on use of technical assistance funds in consultation with school and district SCDE personnel in-kind expenses
Finance Operations	Review of annual “December 1” audit, corrective action plans, and financial risk assessment	Review of annual “December 1” audit, corrective action plans, and financial risk assessment	Review of annual “December 1” audit, corrective action plans, and financial risk assessment	Manage and direct annual “December 1” audit, corrective action plans, and financial risk assessment  Support development of internal controls  SCDE personnel in-kind expenses
Monitoring of the operations of school boards	Monitor training of local board members and attend meetings as needed  Needs assessment of Board operations with improvement priorities as needed	Monitor training of local board members and attend meetings as needed  Needs assessment of Board operations with improvement priorities as needed	Require training of local board members and attend meetings as needed  Needs assessment of Board operations with improvement priorities as needed	Require training of local board members and attend meetings frequently  Needs assessment and directive MOA on Board training and operations
Evaluation	Evaluation of impact of interventions and professional development on student achievement annually	Evaluation of impact of interventions and professional development on student achievement annually	Evaluation of impact of interventions and professional development on student achievement annually	Evaluation of impact of interventions and professional development on student achievement annually  Improvement targets mutually agreed upon by SCDE and district must be met before SCDE returns management back to school or district.



### **VIII. Criteria for Identification of Focus Schools (Targeted Support and Improvement)**

Title I schools designated for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) will be called Focus schools in South Carolina. Focus schools are schools with one or more subgroups that are “low performing” or “consistently underperforming.” There are two ways that a school may be identified as a Focus School:

- **Consistently Underperforming Subgroups-** Schools with one or more historically underperforming subgroups performing at or below the bottom 10 percent of schools across all accountability measures for three consecutive years.
- **Low Performing Subgroups-** Schools with one or more subgroups of students performing at or below the performance of ALL students in the highest performing 5 percent of CSI schools across all indicators.

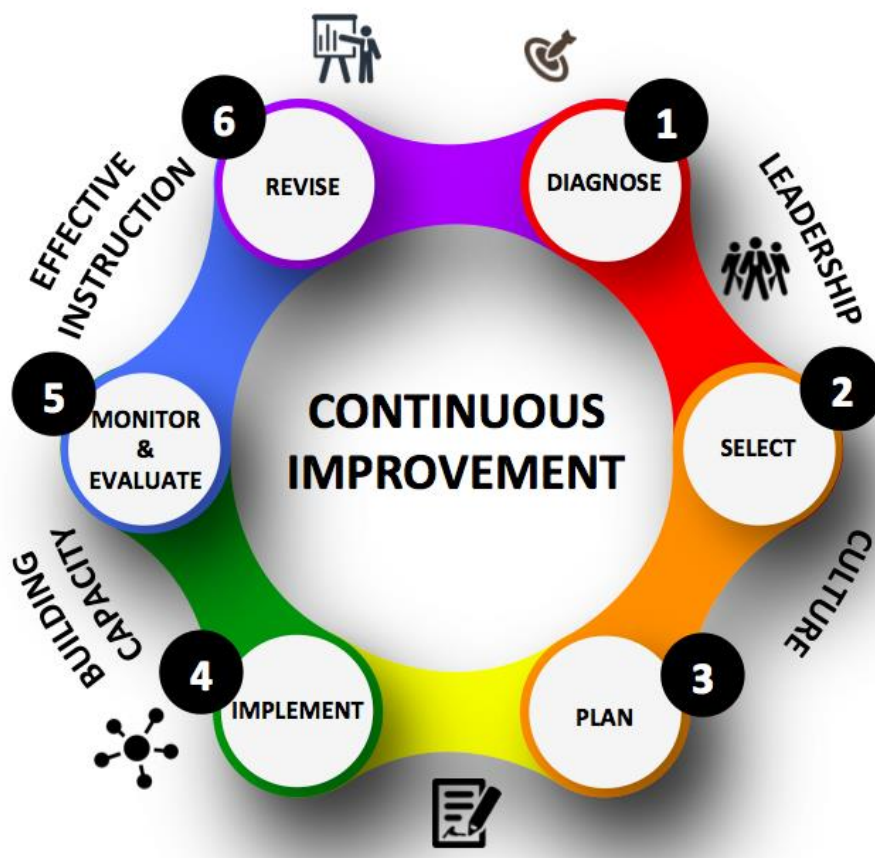
A school could exit Focus School Status for TSI upon achieving the following:

- **Consistently Underperforming Subgroup(s):** Schools will exit targeted support and improvement when the identified subgroup(s) three year average performance is above the three year average performance of ALL students in the bottom 10% in:
  - Elem/Middle: achievement and growth
  - High: School: achievement and college and career readiness
- **Low- performing Subgroup(s):** Schools with low performing subgroups will exit targeted support and improvement when the identified subgroup(s) performance moves above the All students’ performance in the highest performing CSI school in:
  - Elem/Middle: achievement and growth
  - High School: achievement and college and career readiness

### **IX. School Improvement Cycle**

The SCDE School Improvement Planning Cycle is a three-year process with the ultimate goal of schools leaving the cycle capable of sustained improvement and the ability to assist other schools to exit the school improvement cycle with ongoing improvement. The SCDE provides equal amounts of push and support for change. Push is provided through onsite support, school renewal planning and implementation assistance, the clear outcomes-oriented evaluation of results, and the authority to declare either a state of emergency or reconstitution of a school. Support is provided through technical assistance, provision of resources, and work of the transformation coaches. The South Carolina School Improvement Cycle outlines six (6) phases designed to capture the work of schools engaged in a process to improve instructional practice.

# SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MODEL



*Figure 1.* The South Carolina School Improvement Cycle represents the SCDE’s vision for school improvement in the state, Source: South Carolina Department of Education. (2017).

## *Phase 1: Diagnose*

A comprehensive review and analysis of student, perceptual, and environmental data is conducted to establish a baseline that: 1) provides the foundation for understanding the school's strengths and weaknesses, and 2) serves as the basis for selecting research-based strategies and programs to improve student achievement. The needs assessment serves as a formative assessment measure in the school improvement process. It provides documented evidence and specific information regarding key leadership, teaching, and learning practices in the school or district. In addition to the review of instructional and leadership practices, school climate and community engagement are also analyzed. The final result is a comprehensive picture of the school and clear articulation of school improvement priorities.

## *Phase 2: Select Improvement Strategies*

School improvement teams identify priority areas for improvement based on the needs assessment and establish goals and strategies for the top three to five identified priorities – the most important problems to be addressed. Limiting the plan to a critical few allows the school

community (principals, teachers, parents, related service personnel, and paraprofessionals) to focus their efforts. Once priorities are identified, the team works to understand root causes. Techniques such as Ishikawa (cause-and-effect) diagrams or the “5 Whys,” are tools that can be used to conduct the root cause analysis.

### *Phase 3: School Renewal Plan for Improvement*

The School Improvement Team in collaboration with the coach develops a School Renewal Plan to address established priorities. Established priorities should have clear and measurable goals and should meet the evidence-based criteria aligned with the school’s assigned tier level. For example, if the school identifies an attendance problem as a top priority, the school improvement team should state a goal having a clear target, indicator, and milestone date. An effective goal statement is specific, measurable, realistic/relevant, and time-bound. An example of an effective goal statement is, “Increase student attendance rates (indicator) to ninety-four percent per week (target) by December 14, 2020 (milestone date).”

During this phase, the School Improvement Team identifies needed resources, outlines future professional development, and develops a plan for monitoring implementation of the plan. The following considerations are critical when planning implementation of an effective school renewal plan:

- Determine the level (strong, moderate, promising, rationale) of each evidence-based strategy to ensure alignment with the assigned intervention and support tier;
- Define ownership: Assign persons responsible for each strategic action;
- Determine if identified strategies require funding, the source of the funding, and how funding will be sustained;
- Define and provide professional development required to implement each prioritized strategy; and
- Determine the structures and systems needed to support, sustain, and monitor the implementation of the plan.

### *Phase 4: Implement the Plan*

Strategies identified for each goal in the plan are implemented during this phase. Engaging stakeholders, ensuring fidelity of implementation, and using effective systems to support implementation are critical in this phase. The following considerations are critical for implementation:

- Determine a process for working with stakeholders to support and execute the implementation of the improvement strategies and identify necessary behaviors for improvement;
- Determine a process to monitor the fidelity of implementation for each improvement strategy;
- Determine which systems will be used to support the implementation of the plan. This may include systems used to determine needed professional development, analysis of data, and determination of instructional strategies for intervention.

#### *Phase 5: Monitor and Evaluate*

Data are collected on the specific targets established in the School Renewal Plan and analyzed by the School Leadership Team to determine progress toward the set targets. Data may indicate sufficient progress toward the goal, lack of progress/change, or negative impact or change. Adjustments (continue with the strategy, abandon the strategy, or modify the strategy) are made based on the data. Measured results may indicate progress toward the goal, a lack of change, or possibly even a worsening situation. Based upon the results, determine to stay the course or to change strategy. Adequate progress likely means no change is necessary. If progress is being made, but the rate of change is not adequate to ultimately meet the goal, a change in the strategy might be needed, an assessment of the fidelity of the implementation may be needed, or an addition to the strategy may be required.

#### *Phase 6: Revise for Momentum or Sustainability*

Outcomes of the internal analysis of the progress toward set targets in the School Renewal Plan are examined to determine the success of school improvement activities, programs, and strategies. Focus must be placed on maintenance and sustainability. Based on the outcomes, the plan should be revised, following steps one through five to ensure continued improvement or to develop desired momentum. This planning cycle has been described as a series of separate phases, but in practice, the phases may overlap.

### **X. Closing Observations**

The cycle of school improvement answers four critical questions:

1. How are students currently performing?
2. Where do we want our students to perform?
3. What will we do to reach our goals for student learning outcomes?
4. How will we know when student learning outcomes have improved?

It is important to note that continuous school improvement is critical for the sustained success of all schools, regardless of their performance level. This is not a practice simply to be used with low-performing schools. Schools that are able to identify the core principles of continuous improvement and act upon them accordingly, have an increased likelihood of not only improving any deficient areas, but also sustaining any improvement that is achieved as result of following this model or a model such as this.

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## Appendix A

### *SEA Team and Transformation Coaches Roles and Responsibilities Intersect Chart Timeline and Actions*

Phase		Timeline	School Actions	SCDE School Improvement Team Actions	Transformation Coach Actions
1	Identification	Year 1 November	<p>Prior to publication of school report card, school leadership check data and ensure correctness.</p> <p>After publication of school report card, school leadership contacts the SCDE Office of School Transformation with any questions or concerns.</p>	<p>Team finalizes identified schools with the OSFA and/or ORDA after the publication of school report cards.</p> <p>Program managers gather initial school data and define preliminary intervention levels. Managers present schools and identification data to coaches.</p>	Coaches participate in annual trainings and information sessions regarding SCDE policies.
1	Notification	Year 1 November-December	School leadership attends technical assistance session(s).	Program managers notify schools (memo) and provide technical assistance briefings, which include provision of identification data and methodology.	<p>Coaches attend and support technical assistance briefings.</p> <p>Transformation coaches introduced and coach assigned to school for planning purposes.</p>
2	Needs Assessment	Year 1 January-March	School leader participates in SCDE-determined needs assessment(s) to establish root causes and school improvement recommendations.	<p>Program managers participate on external review teams.</p> <p>Team and coaches review overall state root causes and recommendations. Team and coaches identify internal and external strategies and plan support.</p>	<p>Coaches review external review team reports.</p> <p>Team and coaches review overall state root causes and recommendations. Team and coaches identify internal and external strategies and plan support.</p>
3	School Renewal Plan Development	Year 1 April-June  Plan Review	School leadership work with assigned coach to develop School Renewal plan.	Team provides School Renewal Plan template, process, and rubric for approval prior to	<p>Coaches are assigned to schools for School Renewal Plan</p> <p>Team and coaches</p>

				<p>school development.</p> <p>Program managers facilitate plan development with coaches and school leadership.</p> <p>Team and coaches organize and hold plan review day prior to submission deadline for schools to make lateral connections and receive feedback.</p>	<p>organize and hold plan review day prior to submission deadline for schools to make lateral connections and receive feedback.</p>
3	School Renewal Plan Submission and Approval	Year 2 August	School leadership submits the School Renewal Plan for review and approval.	<p>Team uses evaluation rubric to approve plan.</p> <p>Approved plans presented to SBE.</p> <p>Allocations distributed to schools.</p>	Coaches work with assigned schools to facilitate plan development.
4	Plan Implementation	Year 2 September- Year 3 September	<p>School leadership work with assigned coach and program manager to implement plan.</p> <p>School implements School Renewal Plan with support from coaches.</p>		<p>Coaches work with school leadership to support and guide implementation of plan.</p> <p>Coach works with principal, leadership team, and/or ERT team to support and guide implementation of plan with formative feedback.</p>
5	Monitoring and Evaluation	Year 3 October	<p>School leadership submit evaluation and self-reflection</p> <p>School leadership evaluation coach and SCDE support.</p>	<p>Team provides schools with evaluation documents and process prior to due date.</p> <p>Team uses school evaluation and state data to identify successful schools. Successful schools should be identified for PR and</p>	<p>Coaches work with schools to support rigorous and credible evaluation and self-reflection.</p> <p>Team and coaches review evaluation data from schools and set priorities for continuous improvement of services.</p>

			<p>School team implements formative assessment measures as outlined in the School Renewal Plan</p>	<p>partnerships.</p> <p>Team collects evaluation data from schools around SCDE and coach effectiveness.</p> <p>Team and coaches review evaluation data from schools and set priorities for continuous improvement of services.</p> <p>Program Managers monitor implementation and provide updates to Team</p>	<p>Coaches conduct formative assessment and provide manager with quarterly updates.</p>
6	Maintain momentum and sustainability of improvement efforts/strategies	Annually, provided there is evidence of improvement	School team includes strategies in School Renewal Plan to maintain and sustain school improvement initiatives.	SCDOE team ensures the inclusion of sustainability efforts in the approved School Renewal	Coaches support sustainability efforts.